

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 14011

LIMDIS

LONDON FOR AF/W DIRECTOR SMITH

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, NI, SF, PDEV, RH, UK
SUBJECT: OBASANJO'S CONVERSATION WITH SENATOR CLARK: ZIMBABWE
(THIRD OF FIVE SEPTELS)

REF: LAGOS 13944 (NOTAL)

1. OBASANJO SAID HE HAD BEEN SKEPTICAL OF SECRETARY KISSINGER'S
NEW AFRICAN INITIATIVES FORESHADOWED IN THE LUSAKA SPEECH IN APRIL.
NIGERIA HAD ADOPTED A "WAIT AND SEE" ATTITUDE. RECENT DISCUSSIONS
NIGERIA HAD HAD WITH OTHER AFRICAN LEADERS AND REPORTS FROM
GENEVA SEEMED NOW TO BEAR OUT THAT SKEPTICISM.

2. OBASANJO CLAIMED THAT NYERERE AND OTHER FRONTLINE PRESIDENTS
HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN TO SECRETARY KISSINGER REGARDING THE TIMING
OF US "INTERVENTION" IN THE RHODESIAN MATTER. THEY ARGUED SMITH
WAS TOO STRONG. REPLYING THAT "YOU LEAVE SMITH TO US, WE WILL
TAKE CARE OF HIM," THE SECRETARY HAD CONVINCED NYERERE AND OTHERS,
ACCORDING TO OBASANJO, OF THE TIMELINESS OF THE US PROPOSAL.
OBASANJO SAID THAT, GIVEN THIS BACKGROUND, HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND
WHY THE NATIONALISTS WERE NOW BEING TOLD THEY HAD TO SHARE POWER
WITH SMITH. "POWER CAN NEVER BE SHARED WITH THIS MAN AND YOU
LET US THINK IT WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY TO DO SO."

3. OBASANJO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT TWO FORWARD STEPS HAD BEEN TAKEN.
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ONE WAS AGREEMENT ON A DEFINITE DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND A

PROCESS LEADING UP TO IT. THE SECOND WAS SMITH'S ACCEPTANCE OF AN INTERIM ROLE THEY HAD EARLIER CONSISTENTLY REFUSED TO ASSUME.

4. CLARK ASKED WHAT SPECIFIC STEPS NIGERIA THOUGHT OUGHT TO BE TAKEN NOW. OBASANJO SAID THAT BREAKDOWN OF THE GENEVA TALKS MUST AT ALL COSTS BE PREVENTED. WHEREAS HE DID NOT BELIEVE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS COULD BE MADE BEFORE THE SCHEDULED CLOSING DATE OF DECEMBER 21, GIVEN SMITH'S ATTITUDE AND THE APPARENT CURRENT U.S. VIEW THAT THE NATIONALISTS WOULD HAVE TO SHARE POWER WITH HIM IN AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT, HE SAW POSSIBILITIES OF NEW PROGRESS FOR THE TALKS UNDER A NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION. HE SAID NIGERIA PROPOSED THAT THE TALKS BE ADJOURNED FOR ONE MONTH, DURING WHICH TIME FURTHER "DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY PRESSURES" WOULD BE EXERTED AGAINST SMITH. MEANWHILE HE LOOKED TO THE INCOMING U.S. ADMINISTRATION TO PREPARE ITSELF TO WORK OUT WITH THE BRITISH AND FORMULA ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES. THE U.K. WOULD ASSUME A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT. IT DIDN'T MATTER WHAT NAME WAS APPLIED TO THE ROLE - ADMINISTRATOR, COMMISSIONER, GOVERNOR GENERAL, OR WHAT-HAVE-YOU. THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO PROVIDE IT WITH RESPONSIBILITIES AND POWER. THE RESPONSIBILITIES WOULD INCLUDE DEFENSE, LAW AND ORDER, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, AND CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS. THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WOULD BE ONLY ADVISORY WITH REGARD TO THESE MATTERS. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WOULD BE COMPOSED OF "WHITE SETTLERS" AND NATIONALISTS BUT NO SMITH PARTY MEMBERS. THERE WOULD BE NO COUNCIL OF STATE. IN ORDER TO MATCH THESE RESPONSIBILITIES WITH THE POWER NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THEM IF NECESSARY, A COMMONWEALTH DEFENSE FORCE SHOULD BE CONSTITUTED, COMPOSED OF MILITARY CONTINGENTS PROVIDED BY "MAJOR THIRD WORLD POWERS," WITH LOGISTIC BACKING "FROM SUCH COUNTRIES AS CANADA AND PERHAPS BRITAIN."

5. CLARK ASKED HOW TO ASSURE THAT U.K. LEADERSHIP WOULD BE ACCEPTED BY SUCH DISPARATE ELEMENTS AS SMITH'S ARMED FORCES (BOTH WHITE AND BLACK), THE VARIOUS LIBERATION GROUPS INCLUDING ZIPA, AND THE FRONTLINE PRESIDENTS. WOULD NOT THE U.K. NEED TO HAVE SOME KIND OF GUARANTEES FROM SMITH IN PARTICULAR? OBASANJO REPLIED THAT THE U.S. AND OR THE U.K. SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR "CONVINCING, CAJOLING OR FORCING SMITH TO ACCEPT." IN ADDITION, OBASANJO RECKONED THAT ZIPA WOULD BE INCREASING ITS MILITARY EFFORTS

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OVER THE NEXT WEEKS AND THIS COULD WELL FORCE SMITH TO CAPITULATE. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY WOULD BE PRESSURE FROM VORSTER PROVIDED THE U.S. PUSHED VORSTER HARD ENOUGH.

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